

The Scroll and the Lamb

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning and welcome to our morning service. Lovely to be with you once again. There is one intimation for you this morning. The WFM will meet on Wednesday at 7.30.

WFM on Tuesday at 7.30. Let us worship God then by singing to his praise in the Scottish Psalter in Psalm 63.

On page 295. We'll sing the verses marked 1 to 5.

Lord thee my God I'll early seek. My soul doth thirst for thee. My flesh longs in a dry parched land wherein no waters be. That I thy power may behold and brightness of thy face.

As I have seen thee heretofore within thy holy place. Since better is thy love than life my lips thee praise shall give. I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live.

[1 : 1 4] Even as with marrow and with fat my soul shall fill it be. Then shall my mouth with joyful lips sing praises unto thee.

Let us sing these verses then to God's praise in Psalm 63. Lord thee my God I'll early seek. Lord thee my God I'll early seek.

My soul doth thirst for thee. My soul doth thirst for thee. Thy life of joy.

Thy life of joy. Thy life of joy. Thy life of joy. Thy life of joy.

Thy life of joy. My soul doth thirst for thee. Thine is all I've ever had, but I am not here to fall within my holy place.

[2 : 5 5] This earth that is Thy love of life, my lips the praise shall give.

I in Thy name will lift my hand and bless Thee while I live.

It has with my love and with Thine.

My soul shall fill and be. Then shall my mouth with joyfulness sing precious unto Thee.

Let us join together in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we give You thanks that we can come this morning to worship You.

[4 : 4 0] And even with the words that we were singing, that we would seek You early, that our souls would thirst for You. Because we are indeed in a dry parched land without water.

And we pray, O Lord, for that living water. The living water that You promised that You would pour out upon Your people. And You do that day by day through the work of the Holy Spirit upon each and every one that You bring to know You.

And we thank You that You are still doing that. That You are bringing people to a saving knowledge of Yourself. And we thank You, O Lord, that we see in other parts of the world more and more people coming to a knowledge, a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But we pray for our own land, a land once known as the land of the book. But a land that has turned its back upon Your book and Your precepts.

We pray, O Lord, for those who rule over us, for those in our parliaments, for our King and Queen and Royal family, that they would come to a saving knowledge of You.

[5 : 58] We pray for the wisdom that comes from on high. But without wisdom and without righteousness in the nation, the nation indeed will not prosper.

And we are seeing the result of that in our own society over the last number of years. We pray, O Lord, that once again You would revive us.

That You would pour Your Spirit out in a flood of blessing. You say that You can open the windows of heaven and pour down a blessing.

And perhaps we do not seek it as earnestly as we should, nor pray for it as earnestly as we should. We pray, O Lord, that You would revive Your work once again among us.

That in wrath You would remember mercy. And that You would bless all the efforts that are made throughout our island, throughout this congregation, indeed throughout our land and in all parts of the world, to preach Your word in the course of this day.

[7 : 08] We pray that those who listen might be affected by the preaching of the word. That the Holy Spirit would deal with each one according to their needs.

We pray for Your people gathered here this morning, and wheresoever they are gathered, that You would bless them and uphold them and strengthen them, and enable them to continue as faithful witnesses for You.

We pray especially this morning for the congregations in our own denomination that are asked for, for the congregation of Sleet and Sky, that You would uphold and bless them, and bless Gordon Matheson in the work there.

And we remember also the congregation of Helmsdale, that You would uphold and strengthen and bless them as well. And we pray for Roddy Barbas there, as he continues in the work that he has been doing for a number of years there.

So many other things to pray for. We pray particularly this morning for the situation throughout our world, and especially for the situation in the Middle East.

[8 : 18] We pray, O Lord, that You would bring peace once again to that troubled region, and grant that humanitarian aid may be given permission to enter once again.

And we pray, O Lord, that You would uphold and strengthen the witness of Your people among the Jews, that they would be able to see Messiah as He has been promised, and that they would be able to realize that He has indeed come.

For without Him there is no peace, and there will not be peace for perhaps decades to come. But we pray that You would not allow that this situation, which You have allowed so far, that You would not permit it to develop into a further major catastrophe.

We pray also for Ukraine, for Your church there and Your people there, that You would uphold and strengthen them, and that Your restraining grace would be seen upon the invading army.

There are so many other places in the world where trouble and strife is breaking out, a situation in Yemen and various parts of Africa, Your persecuted church in so many parts of the world.

[9 : 42] And we pray, O Lord, that You would bless and uphold those who stand up and witness for You, in spite of imprisonment and pain, and perhaps even unto death.

But we thank You that there are such, and we thank You that there are so many organizations who are spreading the gospel in so many parts of the world.

We pray for Your church throughout Asia, throughout Africa and Europe, and throughout the Americas, and especially in South America, that You would bless and uphold all the efforts that are made to spread Your Word.

We come to this congregation, and we thank You for them. We pray that You would bless them at this particular time. be with those who are away on holiday, or wherever they are at this particular time, and keep them safe in the difficult weather situations that we have been having.

And we thank You for Your restraining hand, that it was not worse as was being predicted. And we thank You, O Lord, that You are sovereign in all these things, that You rule, and Your throne is indeed in heaven.

[11 : 01] And we pray Your blessing upon the congregation here, and the minister and his wife, that You would be with them wheresoever he is. Bless them in his labors here, and guide them in all that he is doing.

And we pray also for the elders and the deacons, and those who organise other things within the congregation, for the WFM, for those who work with the children in the Sabbath school, and any other activities that take place, that You would bless them.

Be with us now as we come to meditate upon Your Word. Help us to remember that it is Your Word given to us, and that it is a holy and a blessed Word, a Word from which we find comfort every single day, that You can uphold us through it, in whatsoever circumstances we are in.

We thank You that it tells of Messiah to come, and Messiah who then came. And we thank You for the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the atonement that was rendered on the cross, for the blood that was shed.

And we thank You that even now He is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. We pray, O Lord, that You would guide us in our worship this morning, guide us in our meditation upon Your Word, and grant that it would be blessed to us, and each one of us would be able to say that it was good for us to have been here.

[12 : 39] Go with us now, and pardon our sin through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. I would normally say a word to the young people at this point, but I see very few this morning.

So it looks as if I'm going to have to pick on you, all by yourself in the middle there, because I don't see any other really young people. Are you still at school?

May I ask that question? Are you still at school? You are. Why have you got a holiday just now? Oh dear.

Doesn't want to answer that. Well, I'll tell you an answer I got when I asked this question before in a different congregation, and a young fellow, much younger than yourself, said, because we need it.

But when I tried to ask and find out why there was a holiday at this particular time in October, nobody knew. At least among the young people.

[13 : 54] I wonder if anyone can tell me why schools have an October holiday. Would anyone dare venture an answer? Say that again.

That's it. That's exactly what it was. Potato lifting. I remember going through the Carloway School logbook a good number of years ago when I was researching something, and there were three or four annotations during this period by the headmaster who said, No pupils came to school today.

They're all lifting potatoes. And eventually, of course, people saw sense and turned it into a holiday. But I wonder if you can tell me the origin of the term holiday.

I mean, why should you have holidays anyway? Why does any of us have a holiday? And don't say because we need it. Well, the answer is quite simple and very interesting.

Holiday was originally spelt with a Y. H-O-L-Y. D-A-Y. Because the only holidays that existed up until probably the beginning of the 20th century with the Education Act in this country were what were called holidays.

[15 : 30] Religious holidays. And these religious holidays, of course, throughout the church were spread across various, particularly in the Anglican church and so on, were spread across various saints' days.

And they were sort of supposed to be days of worship, days of special services and commemoration of the life of various saints.

I bet you're glad that has passed and you can have a real holiday now instead of having to come to church on every day that was a holy day.

But you see, that practice has now come into not only our school lives, but our daily lives. everyone has a right nowadays, at least in this country, to holidays.

But we forget often that the purpose of the holiday originally was to worship God. And that's a good message for us to take with us, that the purpose of holidays really is and should be still to worship God.

[16 : 44] And there's something for you to think about. Well, thank you for listening this morning. Let us sing again the same psalm, but this time in sing-sams on page 80 in the Blue Book, Psalm 63.

And we'll sing the verses from 6 down to the end of the psalm. Upon my bed I lie awake and in my thoughts remember you. I meditate throughout the night and keep your constant love in view.

Because you are my help alone in shadow of your wings I'll sing. You hold me up with your right hand. To you, O God, my soul will cling.

And so on down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 63 and sing psalms at verse 6. Upon my bed I lie awake.

The cold my bed I lie awake.

[17 : 48] I hear my thoughts in my body. And I would sing along on point below.

And keep your calm and loving you, King of Holy Ghost Here, O Lord, my soul and fear.

Oh, who do see our life without our character, O Lord, my soul and fear.

O Lord, my soul and fear. O Lord, my soul and fear. O Lord, my soul and fear.

O Lord, my soul and fear. O Lord, my soul and fear.

[20 : 06] O Lord, my soul and fear. O Lord, my soul and fear.

O Lord, my soul and fear. O Lord, my soul and fear. O Lord, my soul and fear. O Lord, my soul and fear. And we'll read chapters 4 and chapter 5.

Book of Revelation chapter 4, reading at the beginning. Amen. Amen. After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven.

And the first voice which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, Come up here. Come up here. And I will show you what must take place after this. And once I was in the spirit.

And behold, a throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of Jasper and Cornelian. And round the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.

[21 : 15] Round the throne were twenty-four thrones. And seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

From the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder. And before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God.

And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind.

The first living creature like a lion. The second living creature like an ox. The third living creature with the face of a man. And the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within. And day and night they never cease to say, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

[22 : 22] And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever.

They cast their crowns before the throne saying, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

Then I saw on the right hand of him who was seated on the throne, a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And I began to weep loudly, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more.

[23 : 30] Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, is conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain. And by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. Then I looked and I heard about the throne the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying, To him who sits on the throne and to the lamb, be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever.

[25 : 11] And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped. Amen. And may the Lord bless to us that reading of his holy and infallible word and to his name be the praise.

Let's sing again, this time in Psalm 89 in the Scottish Psalter, on page 344 in the Blue Book. Psalm 89, and we'll sing the verses marked 1 to 6, down to the bottom of the page.

God's mercies I will ever sing, and with my mouth I shall, thy faithfulness make to be known to generations on. For mercy shall be built, said I, forever to endure.

Thy faithfulness, even in the heavens, thou wilt establish sure. And so on to verse 6, For who in heaven with the Lord may once himself compare, who is like God among the sons of those that mighty are.

Let's sing these verses into God's praise. Psalm 89, the beginning, God's mercies I will ever sing. God's mercies I will ever sing.

[26 : 34] God's mercies I will ever sing. God's mercies I will ever sing. God's mercies I will ever sing.

God's mercies I will ever sing. God's mercies I will ever sing, and I will sing. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

[28 : 50] O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. The praise is all my wonderful Lord.

O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew. O mercy shall we even set up all other good than Jew.

[30 : 08] who ye thy good and glorious of all those that mighty are.

Let's turn back then to the portion of Scripture that we read. And we can read again in chapter 5 at verse 5.

One of the elders said to me, Weep no more. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And so on. And I want to look at this passage, the two chapters together, really, as we go through and see some of the interesting things that we are given a glimpse of in this revelation.

[31 : 44] And we see at the beginning of chapter 4 that this is like a separate section of the book of Revelation.

This is the third section that we are coming to here. In the first chapter in Revelation, we were told that this was the revelation that John was given.

And we're told in chapter 1 and verse 9 that I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the perish and endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

And you notice that it then says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and I'd heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches.

And then the section with the seven churches forms the second section of the vision that John is given. It's one continuous vision.

[32 : 57] It's not a series of separate visions, but one continuous vision that John sees. And therefore, we see this at the beginning of chapter 4, after this I looked, after he had been given the letters to the seven churches.

And then he looks and sees a door standing open in heaven. Or a door open, or was opening, depends how you translate the tense in the Greek there.

And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, come up here. Whose voice is it?

Well, again, if you go back to chapter 1, the first voice, we are told at the end of chapter 1, that Jesus identifies himself in the chapter, in the vision that John has given of him.

And then it is Jesus who is speaking to him here again. And this is the invitation that is given. In fact, it's not really an invitation, it's an order.

[34 : 09] Come up here. And I will show you what must take place after this. And it's quite amazing to think that the church militant, that is, the church here on earth, is given a vision of the church triumphant in heaven.

because that's what the book of Revelation, the revelation that John has given, is all about. And there are many people who find the book of Revelation extremely difficult to understand.

And I have to agree that there are passages, and we'll see a couple of them even in chapter 4 itself, that are very difficult to interpret exactly what is meant by them.

But you have to bear in mind that this is written for first century Christians. John had been banished to Patmos from Ephesus.

Now, Patmos is a small island in the Aegean Sea. And if you go online, I'm sure virtually everyone goes online nowadays, you can actually take a tour of Patmos, a visual tour of it online, and you can see the supposed cave where John lived.

[35 : 40] during the period of time that he was there. We don't know how long he was on Patmos. We know it was sometime around just after 80 AD.

It may have been a little bit later than that. It may have been a little bit earlier. And he was banished there by the Emperor Domitian. You will remember, of course, that in the Roman Empire at this time, there was a tradition of emperor worship.

And therefore, anyone who worshipped anything other than the Roman emperor was guilty of treachery against the state and was either executed or banished like John was.

and I'm sure you're very familiar with the tales of Christians being thrown to the lions, etc., and many of the other atrocities that Nero, who was prior to Domitian, that Nero carried out in the city of Rome itself.

It's an interesting fact also that John is the only one of the twelve apostles who dies a natural death in old age.

[36 : 57] Every other one of the apostles is martyred for their faith. We know that John died in Ephesus.

Later, writers like Polycarp and Irenaeus tell us, and the historian Tertullian, tell us that John as an old man was carried into the church in Ephesus by the young men of the congregation even when he could no longer walk.

And that was sometime after 95 AD. How old was John when he died? Well, we know that he was a young man when he followed Jesus, probably the youngest of the disciples.

And many people surmise that that was why he was called the beloved disciple. That's why Jesus loved him so much, because he was the youngest. But that, of course, is speculation.

And here he is then. Come up here, he is told by Jesus, and I will show you what must take place after this.

[38 : 07] At once, I was in the Spirit. And remember that this is on the Lord's day. You go back to chapter 1, you see that this is taking place on the Sabbath, the Christian Sabbath, not the Jewish Sabbath, the Christian Sabbath.

Isn't it a wonderful thing to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day? Would that that would be the case for each one of us here this morning, that on the Lord's day we would be in the Spirit, and not just on the Lord's day, but every day.

And then John sees a vision, a vision which is given to be directed and written down and sent to the church militant here on earth, and recorded so that you and I can also see and understand this vision.

And it is a vision of the throne room of heaven. It is quite amazing that John is given a glimpse into the throne room of heaven.

What does he see? A throne stood in heaven with one seated on the throne. Now this is not the throne of judgment.

[39 : 36] We see later on in Revelation the great white throne which is the throne of judgment. this is the throne of God's presence. And we see various things with it.

He who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian and round their throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Now it is not a rainbow in the sense that it is different colours.

John simply describes it as a rainbow because of its shape. But the colour is green. And the green colour is symbolic of peace.

Throughout the book of Revelation you have to bear in mind that much symbolism is used and we are going to see that in a moment. And also many things are used like numbers.

The numerology, the study of numbers in the book of Revelation is extremely interesting as well. people. And we will see that in a moment when we see 24 thrones, 24 elders, 7 torches of fire, 7 spirits of God and so on.

[40 : 53] And you remember that just before this there had been the 7 letters to the 7 churches in Asia and that is in modern day Turkey. But there were more than 7 churches in Asia at the time.

If you look at a map of the churches, the 7 letters, you can see that they sort of go in a circular direction going round these 7 churches.

But there were other churches. And then we are told at various points that it's 7 angels. And there were far more than 7 angels. We see that even in the passages that we read.

And 7 symbolizes the perfection of God. 7 is God's perfect number. That's why there are 7 days in the week.

And on the seventh day God rested and so on. And much of the symbolism and the numerology relates back to things in the Old Testament.

[41 : 54] And do you remember in the Old Testament in the book of Exodus how Moses had been taken up into Mount Sinai and given a vision of the tabernacle.

He's given the twelve commandments first of all and then he's given all the details of the tabernacle. And what it is to be made of, how it's to be built, the size, the dimensions.

And he's instructed very carefully, see that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown to you in the mountain. And the pattern that Moses was shown in the mountain is exactly what we see here in the book of Revelation.

The tabernacle is a replacement on earth for the throne room of God in heaven where God would meet with his people.

And you see that especially in the Holy of Holies where there was nothing in the Holy of Holies but the Ark of the Covenant and on top of the Ark of the Covenant the two cherubim that leaned over almost touching each other but looking down on the slab of gold that was on top of the Ark which was the mercy seat.

[43 : 26] And you will remember if you're familiar with the tabernacle that it was on the mercy seat that the blood was sprinkled once a year by the high priest on the day of atonement for his own sins and for the sins of the people.

And that's exactly the pattern that we see here. Much of the symbolism that we see in this next little passage all relates back to the furnishings and the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle furniture.

We're not seeing the tabernacle here. We're seeing the real thing.

The tabernacle was a copy. It was a copy on earth for people for the Lord's people to worship outside it.

Remember that no one was allowed into the tabernacle either the holy place or the most holy place except the priests. The Aaronic priests.

[44 : 40] Even the majority of the Levites the tribe chosen to serve were not allowed into the tabernacle itself. Only in dismantling and erecting the tabernacle as they moved from place to place.

And there's so much detail in that and I'm sure you can go back yourself and look and see. And you see that for example you see in verse 5 from the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire which are the seven spirits of God.

You see again the perfect number. And before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like crystal. Now the sea of glass like crystal is of course the labour.

It's the reminiscent of the labour the Old Testament labour that stood in front of the tabernacle where the priests washed and where many of the sacrifices were often washed.

Excuse me. And the washing of course was a ritual symbol again of holiness. holiness. And you remember that the garments that they had to wear in serving the Lord in the tabernacle also had a symbolism in everything.

[46 : 03] I don't have time right now to go through every single piece of symbolism for example in the high priest's garments. But if you go back and compare what Jesus is wearing in chapter 1 of Revelation to what the high priest would wear as he went into the Holy of Holies you will see that there are great similarities between the two.

We see also that the one who is sitting on the throne here has the appearance of Jasper and Carnelian. Now both of those were stones that were in the high priest's breastplate.

And you remember that the high priest had a breastplate on which were twelve stones, three rows of four if I remember correctly and each one of them had the name of a tribe, one of the twelve tribes engraved on it.

And therefore you see that the number twelve is extremely important. And in the symbolism that is used here we find that three is the number of the Trinity, four is the universal number, and three times four makes twelve, and twelve is the number of the church.

Now, I know it's difficult to hold in your mind all these little details as we go through this, but this is what we see round the throne.

[47 : 44] Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, notice twelve times two, and seated on the throne were twenty-four elders, again twelve times two, clothed in white garments.

And every time you come across white garments in the book of Revelation and in the Old Testament priesthood, the white garment was a symbol of holiness.

And before the throne, seven torches of fire. And you will remember that in the holy place, that is the outer part of the tabernacle, stood the menorah.

That is the candlestick having seven candles on it, one for each day of the week, but they all burned at the same time, that lit the holy place of the tabernacle.

And there's the symbol again. Seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God. Now, people say, well, what does the seven spirits mean?

[48 : 48] Surely God is only one spirit. And that is a very interesting question that you can deal with. When you come to define God, perhaps I digress for a couple of minutes here, what is God?

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. So where does the number seven come from? And again, you will see, and if you look at the end of chapter one, you will see the symbolism of the idea of seven.

So who is on the throne? Well, if you look carefully at what we read, you will see that in verse four it says, round the throne were twenty-four thrones.

Now that means that they were arranged in a circle round the throne. And you would think if someone is sitting on the throne and there's a circle round him of people, that he's going to have his back to some of them.

Not so. God is a spirit. And therefore his presence is there for all the twenty-four elders at all times.

[50 : 11] In the same way that God's sovereignty and God's mercy, etc., and all the other attributes of God are present at all times for each and every one of his people.

And this is the vision that we're given into heaven, of the father sitting on his throne, surrounded by the twenty-four elders and the four beasts.

And people ask, well, who are the twenty-four elders? We're never told in the course of the book of Revelation, of John's vision, who the twenty-four are.

But the majority of commentators interpret this as signifying the twelve tribes, representatives of the twelve tribes of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New Testament.

And some say, how can John possibly be seeing himself? He's still in human form. How can he be seeing himself as one of the elders?

[51 : 24] And we have no answer to that question. We simply cannot understand that. John in his human form is given the vision, but he's not yet present in heaven.

According to the chronology of the New Testament, all the other eleven apostles were already dead at this point and therefore could be in heaven upon these thrones.

and there are some who have surmised, and I'm afraid I can't agree with them, that the twelfth apostle is Judas. That Judas was granted mercy because he repented afterwards.

But I can't go along with that. You can figure that one out yourself. Whoever these twenty-four elders are, they form an extremely important part of the vision that John sees.

And then we come to the living creatures, the four living creatures. Now we've met these before in scripture. The descriptions that we've seen of them before are not exactly the same as the descriptions here.

[52 : 46] we met them in Isaiah's vision, in Isaiah 6. When Isaiah is given the vision and told to go forth as a prophet, and you will remember that there are four living creatures there as well.

But if you look at the two descriptions they're not exactly the same. And you find it again in Ezekiel 10, when Ezekiel is also given a vision, and Ezekiel identifies the four living creatures as the cherubim.

Isaiah calls them seraphim. But again, there is no exact consistency between the two. But it doesn't really matter. There are numerous interpretations, some of them weird and wonderful, given to what the four living creatures mean.

The one I prefer, I'm not saying it's the right one, I don't know, I don't think anyone knows. But the one I prefer, the lion, the ox, face of a man, and the eagle.

But the lion represents nature and wild animals. The ox represents domestic animals, and man's harvesting and use of nature.

[54 : 13] nature. The third, of course, represents human beings, and the fourth represents the world of birds. And therefore, in a way, we see that they represent the creation itself.

Now, some argue with that and say, but there's no mention of the sea or fish or anything like that. Agreed, there isn't. And why that is, and what the correct interpretation of the four living creatures is, nobody's really sure.

And there's a sense in which it doesn't really matter. What matters is what they do. The four living creatures, each of them with six wings, full of eyes all around and within, day and night, they never cease to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

That's what matters. That's what they say. And one of the things that you should have noticed as we went through chapters four and chapters five is that the praise starts first of all with the four living creatures.

And then it spreads. The next thing we see in verse 11, the 24 elders are included. And by the time we come into chapter five, we see that not only are these included, but then towards the end of chapter five in verse 11, I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.

[56 : 01] Goodness only knows how many angels are involved in the worship of God. And again, there's a sense in which it doesn't matter. And the study of angels is a very interesting thing to go into.

Again, I don't have time for that this particular morning. But what matters is holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

This is one of the attributes of God, his holiness, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And I wonder, just as a bythought for you, our Lord Jesus Christ, even when he became human and took on a human body, never left, never left his divine nature.

His divine nature accompanied him at all times, both God and man. how it must have borrowed him, one who was used to perfect holiness, to be surrounded by sin for 33 years on earth.

I wonder if you ever meditated on that one. That's why he weeps at the tomb of Lazarus. He's not weeping for the death of Lazarus because he's going to raise him in a few minutes.

[57 : 27] But he's weeping for what sin has done, how sin has brought death into the world. And it's only he who can, of course, cure that particular illness.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. It's the only attribute of God that is mentioned three times, not just here, but in the Old Testament as well.

The vision of Isaiah, holy, holy, holy. Thrice holy. And there are some who think that this is mentioned three times because there are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It's curious, isn't it, that we only apply the term holy to the Holy Spirit. the Father is equally holy, the Son is equally holy. They are all equally holy, not one more holy than the other, or less holy.

And of all the attributes of God, His holiness and His perfection is perhaps the one that you and I understand least.

[58 : 46] even in the Old Testament, the message was given to the people of Israel when the tabernacle was consecrated to be ye holy as I am holy.

And how can you and I ever approach the holiness that God requires of us? It's impossible because our human nature simply cannot cope with God's holiness because our human nature is tainted with sin.

But yet there is an answer to this. And that's the answer that we see in chapter 5. After they've cast their crowns before the throne and sung again, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

And then we see the scroll written on both sides, sealed with seven seals. And see again the symbolism of the seven. What is the scroll?

The scroll is the book of God's decrees. What God has decreed since before the creation of the earth. And it's in the scroll, as we see later on in chapters six and seven, that all the woes begin to be released bit by bit until we come into the end times.

[60 : 27] That's what theologians call eschatology, the study of the end times. And it's a very interesting thing to do, but it's also a very difficult thing to do.

But again, we don't have time to go into that very much. And I saw a strong angel saying, who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?

No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And people question and say, well, who's under the earth?

That in itself is quite an interesting question. But again, you have to remember that the Jewish people believed and there was a belief, not just among the Jews, but you find it in Greek literature as well, that the underworld, Hades, the word that's often used in translation, was underneath the earth, that the center of the earth, in other words, was Hades, was hell.

And maybe that's what the reference is intended to. But again, we are, in a sense, speculating. But no one is able to open the scroll except one.

[61 : 44] One of the elders said to me, weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and seven seals.

Time has passed, so I'll have to brush through this a little bit here. The lion of the tribe of Judah, you go back again to the Old Testament and you find that the Lord Jesus Christ is descended from Judah.

And that the term is used, you'll find references to the term in the Old Testament as well. The root of David, this is descendant from David and the number of Old Testament promises that were made that a descendant of David would be the one who would redeem and save his people from their sins.

Who is this, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David? Who is it? We see this so clear in verse 6. Between the throne and the four living creatures and amongst the elders I saw a lamb standing.

And you remember what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus for the first time coming towards him. Behold the lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

[63 : 12] And what was the significance of the lamb? Well again if you go back to the Old Testament, this of course is the Passover lamb. Again, time will not permit me to go into the symbolism of the Passover, but you will remember of course that the Passover was how Israel left Egypt.

You remember that was the moment on which all the firstborn of Egypt died. And the firstborn of Israel would also have died had it not been for one thing.

You remember that the blood of the Passover lamb, the lamb which was to be eaten that evening in haste before they left Egypt, that the blood had to be collected in a bowl and then using hyssop, that's a small shrub, using hyssop it had to be painted on the doorposts of the house and on the lintel above the door.

Passover. So that when the destroyer passed over, there's where the term Passover comes from, he would see the blood and pass over.

Many people say it's the angel of death. There's no mention of such a term in scripture, the angel of death, by the way. So be careful with that one. The destroyer is referred to.

[64 : 50] Although the Old Testament says, when I see the blood, it is the Lord, God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who carry out the action.

And it's the same blood we see that is offered by the high priest on the day of atonement throughout the Passover rituals, every year from then on.

Now it should be fairly obvious to you what the symbolism of the blood is. It leads us, of course, to the blood of the cross.

It leads us to the Lamb of God who is crucified for his people, and whose blood is shed, because without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin.

That's how the writer to the Hebrews puts it. And you see so clearly the pattern that has been laid down in the Old Testament, being brought to its fullness in the new.

[65 : 57] This is the cure for sin. There is no other cure. The blood of Jesus Christ being applied. It's no use unless it's applied.

The blood in the bowl of the Passover was useless unless it was applied to the doorposts. and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, it may sound disrespectful to say is useless, but in a sense it is unless it is applied to the human heart.

And that's what you and I need every single day. There is no other way in which we can become holy enough to satisfy God's justice because through the blood what happens?

The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. This is the one who is interceding for us on the right hand of the Father.

This is the one who is guiding us, who made atonement for us, who gave himself for us so that each and every one of his people will then be holy, holy, holy.

[67 : 17] And although we will not be fully holy and fully sanctified until we pass into eternity, that's quite a thought, isn't it?

Think of the number of people even in just the Middle East who have gone into eternity in the last week. And isn't it a frightening thought to stand before the throne of God for judgment unless you are covered by the blood of the atonement.

That is what the Lamb here is all about. Weep no more. And you and I can take comfort in rejoicing from that this morning, that we are told to weep no more, even although we sin daily in thought, word and deed.

And we fail to carry out many of the sins that we commit are sins of omission, things that we don't do rather than things that we should do.

Very few of God's people deliberately break God's law and sin deliberately. but probably all of us sin by omission.

[68 : 39] Things that we should do, we don't do. Our daily worship, our daily reading, our glorifying of God, our studying of his word, our spending time in prayer.

But weep no more because the lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered. and as he has conquered he is able to open the scrolls.

And when you see in chapter 6 and chapter 7, the opening of the scrolls, what a fearful thing it is if we are not covered by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless to us these thoughts this morning. Let us pray. We thank you Lord for the understanding that you give us of your word, for the vision that John received.

We pray that you would open to us more and more, that we can see the efficacy of the blood that was shed on the cross, and see our need to be cleansed by that blood day by day.

[69 : 49] We thank you for your sanctifying power on your people. Although none of us are what we should be, and none of us are what we want to be, yet you will bring each and every one of us home to glory, those who believe on you.

And yet what a frightening prospect it is, as we see in the later part of the book of Revelation, for those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that you would have mercy on us.

Be gracious to any this morning who are struggling with their faith. Make yourself known to them, and be with us now, and pardon sin for Christ's sake.

Amen. Let us conclude then by singing in the same psalm, Psalm 89, on page 345, where we see verses that apply particularly to the throne room vision.

Psalm 89, at verse 13, thou hast an arm that's full of power, thy hand is great in might, and thy right hand exceedingly exalted is in height, justice and judgment of thy throne are made the dwelling place, mercy accompanied with truth, shall go before thy face.

[71 : 11] O greatly blessed the people are the joyful sun that know in brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go. in view of the time will just sing these three verses.

Psalm 89, at verse 13, thou hast an arm that's full of power. Amen. exceedingly the exalted is in height, justice and judgment of thy throne amid the dwelling mercy MERCI

COMPETE Watts sans go JE DIRECLA eins ACE km Phen Dale jemand S■ Hesy The people are the joyful sound that glow In brightness of thy face, O Lord The heaven of the Lord shall go If you would give me a minute to get to the door after the benediction, please.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever. Amen.